

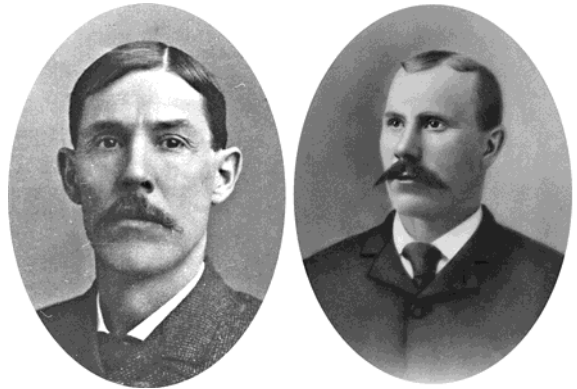


## *Historic Signage*

### **Falls City Masonic Hall**

Built in 1895, King Co. Landmark 1994, Nat'l Historic Register 2004

Efforts to establish a Masonic Lodge in Fall City began in 1889. The initiators were Almus and Davis Rutherford and Edwin Thompson of Fall City, Fred Bagwell of Tolt (now Carnation) and Dr. William Gibson of Gilman (now Issaquah), all of whom were already Masons.



*Almus and George Davis Rutherford,  
Fall City Pioneers*

They were joined in the effort by Albert Sloan and Erwin Stewart of Seattle. A February 1, 1890 note from the files of the Grand Lodge of Washington states: "I send you today by N.P. express... recommendation for a new lodge at Falls (sic) City King Co...." A dispensation was soon granted to the Falls City Lodge, No. 66, thus establishing a title which was different from the official name of the town. (Although "Fall City" was the official town name assigned when a Post Office petition was granted by the Washington Territorial Post Office in 1875, many early documents, such as the 1889 Census still used the "Falls City" designation.)



*Doc Taylor's store and hotel,  
Fall City c1888*

The first meeting of the new Lodge was held in the hall above Taylor's store on River Street on February 21, 1890. Among the first decisions was the selection of a meeting night. Because of the difficulty in traveling at night, it was a common practice at that time for lodges to meet on a night near the full moon. Such lodges were termed "Moon Lodges." The organizers of the Falls City Lodge decided to meet on the Saturday on or



next preceding the full moon. Falls City Lodge continued to be a “Moon Lodge” until 1920.



*Falls City IOOF Hall, built c1890*

On Sunday September 2, 1894, a fire destroyed Taylor’s store, including the upstairs hall with the charter, records, regalia and property of Falls City Lodge. The Lodge promptly requested a replacement charter and arranged to meet in the upstairs meeting room in the Fall City IOOF hall, also on River Street and shown at left.

On March 9, 1895, the lodge voted “to proceed at once to prepare for a new Lodge room.” The building was completed in December 1895, with much of the labor donated. The cost of the hall, as listed for insurance purposes, was \$500. The first meeting was held in the new hall in January 1896, and dedication ceremonies were held in July that year.



The exterior of the Hall has changed remarkably little over the years. A small addition was made to the east end of the building in 1921 and a hoist and fire escape added later. The side windows have been boarded up during some periods.

(See pdf for interior views)

Over the years, members of the Falls City Lodge have included many of the mainstays of the local community and lower Valley. Almus and Davis Rutherford were both listed in the census records as farmers. Davis established hop farming in the lower Valley. Almus was the more educated brother and devoted much of his time to teaching and governmental functions.





Later members included the beloved Dr. W.W. Cheney (right), who came to Fall City in 1905. Known fondly as “Doc,” he served the community for over four decades.



Other prominent members were Edwin R. Opstad, principal of the Fall City Brick School from 1929 to 1944 and later superintendent of the Snoqualmie Valley School District, and LeRoy Bronemann, Fall City Postmaster for almost 40 years.

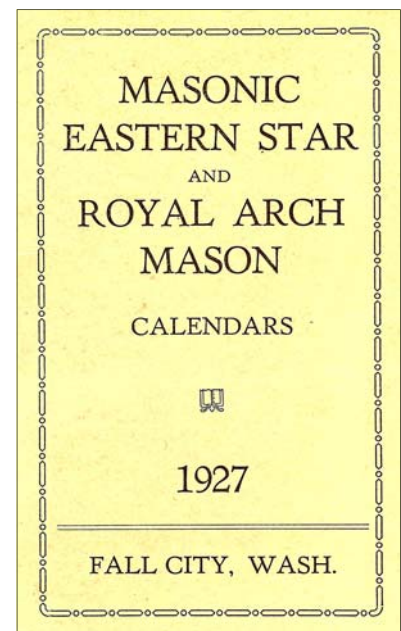


*Edwin R.  
Opstad*



*LeRoy  
Bronemann*

The Lodge itself and affiliated groups such as the Order of the Eastern Star, Royal Arch Masons, and the youth groups Jobe’s Daughters and Demolay played an important role in the social life of the community. In the Fall City Historical Society collection is a Calendar published in 1927 which lists the officers and members for the Falls City Lodge (166 members), Order of the Eastern Star (211 members) and the Royal Arch Masons (90 members).



(See pdf for Falls City Lodge list of members, 1927)



The 1927 numbers may represent the high point of membership and work for the Falls City Lodge. However, the current membership includes a number of 18-21-year-olds, many in their 30s and early 40s, and a goodly handful of elder statesmen. The Lodge has always attempted to help members and their families where needed. In June 1986 the tradition of holding pancake breakfasts in conjunction with Fall City Days celebrations was started and continues to provide funds for charity. One of the services provided to the community over the years has been making the Hall available for events.



Fall City School 1889

Sierra Valley Historical Museum

A small building called Lyceum Hall, shown at left, stood on the property where the Masonic Hall was built, and was used at various times to provide needed school space. It was moved to the back of the lot when the Hall was built and continued to be used. In 1914, the main floor of the Masonic Hall was rented to the School District for \$10/month for use as school space.

Over the years, many hundreds of community events...memorials, receptions and celebrations...have taken place in the Masonic Hall.

The current members like to think that the Hall is a historical building where history is still being written, as Freemasons continue "to make good men better." A website is available for further information, [www.fallcitylodge.com](http://www.fallcitylodge.com).

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REFERENCE: For the most complete history on the Falls City Masonic Lodge, see *One Hundred Years of Masonry in Fall City*, written by Edwin A. Opstad for the Lodge Centennial in 1990. This is available in the Fall City Historical Society Reference Library and at the Fall City branch of King County Library.